

Message Text

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TO AMEMB TOKYO JAPAN

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OAC FORT BUCKNER OKINAWA

COMUSJ FUCHU JAPAN

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EXDIS

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR JA

SUBJ: OKINAWAN REDUCTIONS IN FORCE

1. I AM SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE MASSIVE RIF'S OF OKINAWAN EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. FORCES WHICH SEEM CERTAIN TO OCCUR OVER THE NEXT 12 TO 18 MONTHS. WHILE PRECISE FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE, AND WILL DEPEND FINALLY ON BUDGETARY AND OTHER OFF-ISLAND DECISIONS, MY TALKS WITH LOCAL COMMANDERS SUGGEST THAT SUCH RIF'S WILL BE FAR LARGER THAN FOR ANY PREVIOUS PERIOD AND MAY RANGE FROM 4000 PERHAPS AS HIGH AS 7,000 IF CONTRACT WORKERS ARE INCLUDED.

2. SUCH MASSIVE RIF'S OBVIOUSLY WILL CAUSE MAJOR PROBLEMS

FOR THE U.S. ON OKINAWA. THE LEFTIST ELEMENTS AND THE LOCAL REFORMIST GOVERNMENT IN ANY EVENT WILL BE QUICK TO SEIZE ON THE PROBLEM FOR AS MUCH POLITICAL ADVANTAGE AS CAN BE GAINED. THERE WILL, IN FACT, HOWEVER, BE REAL HARDSHIP FOR MANY OF THOSE U.S. EMPLOYEES - SOME OF LONG DURATION WITH U.S. FORCES - IN FINDING SATISFACTORY ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT. THE YOUNG AND

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THE SKILLED WILL BE OK, BUT THE OLDER AND THE LESS SKILLED

WILL HAVE IT FAR HARDER. WE SUSPECT THAT, DESPITE THE PRESENT BOOM, THE OKINAWAN ECONOMY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ABSORB QUICKLY AND PRODUCTIVELY LARGE NUMBERS OF SUDDENLY UNEMPLOYED WORKERS.

3. THE PROBLEM OF HOW BEST TO HANDLE THESE RIF'S SHOULD BE ADDRESSED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE SLIP INTO THESE RIF'S PIECEMEAL USING THE STANDARD PROCEDURES DOES NOT SEEM WISE. AS A FIRST STEP, BASED ON INFORMATION BOTH HERE AND FROM WASHINGTON, WE NEED THE BEST POSSIBLE ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBERS INVOLVED OVER THE NEXT 12 TO 18 MONTHS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR EARLY CONSULTATIONS WITH GOJ ON THE FULL MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM. SUCH CONSULTATIONS WILL, OF COURSE, NOT BE WITHOUT RISK. THEY MAY PROVOKE FURTHER REQUESTS FOR BASE REDUCTIONS. AS OUR COMMANDERS HERE FEAR WITH GOOD

REASON, THE CONSULTATIONS MAY LEAK, THUS STIMULATING PREMATURE LABOR PROBLEMS AND AGITATION. AS WE HAVE SEEN, HOWEVER, WITH THE RECENT CASE OF THE TERMINATION OF THE MARINE MESS HALL CONTRACT EMPLOYEES, LATE NOTICE OF THE TERMINATION AGGRAVATES THE PROBLEM GREATLY. OUR BEST HOPE OF MAKING THE REDUCTIONS IN A FASHION AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE PROBABLY LIES IN GETTING THE GOJ TO BEGIN EARLY AND QUIETLY TO IMPLEMENT THE NECESSARY COUNTERMEASURES TO PROVIDE FOR THE SEVERED EMPLOYEES.

4. I BELIEVE THE PROSPECTIVE RIF'S ALSO LEND URGENCY TO BASE CONSOLIDATIONS. FROM MY DISCUSSIONS WITH A WIDE SPECTRUM OF OKINAWAN POLITICAL ELEMENTS, IT IS CLEAR THAT ALMOST EVERYONE PRIVATELY UNDERSTANDS THAT THE DESIRED GOAL OF A REDUCED U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE ON OKINAWA INEVITABLE INVOLVES A CUT IN WORKERS. (WE ALSO ALWAYS POINT THIS OUT IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM.) THE PROTESTS OVER THE RIF'S WILL BE UNDERCUT IF IT IS CLEAR THE RIF'S ARE OBVIOUSLY MATCHED BY BASE REDUCTIONS, AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL BE MAGNIFIED GREATLY IF THERE IS NOT CORRESPONDING REDUCTIONS IN THE BASES, AND RETURN OF LAND. TO MINIMIZE THE PROBLEMS FOR THE AMERICAN PRESENCE HERE, AS WE MAKE OUR BASE CONSOLIDATIONS AND HAVE FIRM COMMITMENTS

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ON PROSPECTIVE CONSOLIDATIONS, EVERY EFFORT SHOULD THEN BE MADE TO CONVEY THE IDEA THAT THE RIF'S ARE IN FACT PART AND PARCEL OF A SCALE DOWN IN THE OKINAWAN BASES.
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